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Fishing boat owners' forum rejects move to stop regn of new trawlers



Shrimp is the only catch traditional fishermen get these days. Fishermen arrange their catch for auction at Kalamukku fishing harbour.

KOCHI: The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association has rejected the recommendation of the national-level action plan for the sustainable development of marine fisheries calling for stopping the registration of new fishing vessels in Indian waters. The proposal is intended to solve the fleet overcapacity in the sector.

The plan was formulated at a national workshop on Sustainable Development Goal-14 (SDG) of the United Nations in India organised by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) and WWF-India as suggested by NITI Aayog. The recommendation in the action plan to stop new registration of fishing vessels cannot be accepted, said All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association General Secretary Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal.

“There is no data or a study which proves the high number of boats is the reason for depletion in marine fishery resources. Fisheries research institutes should carry out a study to examine the reasons behind over exploitation of resources,” he said.

Certain species of fish which used to be found along the Kerala coast have migrated to other parts of the country now, said Xavier. “Sardine being a case in point. The landing of sardine has fallen drastically over the past few years. But they are found along the coast of other states. In an international study, it was found rivers in Kerala were influencing the equilibrium of marine life along the state’s coast.

Microbes deposited by rivers were the main natural feed of fish, making their flesh tastier. With no feed available, the shoals have migrated to other parts of the sea where microbes are available. No studies have been carried out on environmental changes influencing marine biodiversity. Yet, scientists blame fisher folk,” he said.

Xavier said instead of the trawling ban, the government should put curbs on catching spawners (fish with roe). “It’s been found not all species breed during monsoon. Instead, it happens round the year. If the breeding was only during the monsoon, marine resources would have increased considerably as the ban has been in place for more than 30 years,” he said.

Meanwhile CMFRI authorities clarified the restriction on registration of boats was recommended as the number of fishing boats was too high. According to a study, in 2010, the number of boats was disproportionate to the resources, except in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep Islands where the number of mechanised fishing boats is very low.

Action plan

Registration of new fishing vessels in Indian waters will be stopped

This is intended to solve the fleet overcapacity in the sector